

Sends Letter to U.S. Fire Administrator Urging His Involvement

March 18, 2010

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) today sent a letter to the nation's top fire official requesting his assistance in protecting homeowners from toxic Chinese drywall. In his letter to U.S. Fire Administrator Kelvin Cochran, Congressman Melancon noted that corrosion of electrical wiring caused by toxic Chinese drywall could pose a serious fire hazard for homeowners.

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"We write today to request your assistance in providing for the safety of families across the nation whose homes are tainted with Chinese drywall," wrote Congressman Melancon. "...the [Consumer Product Safety Commission] has established a 'strong association' between chemicals emitted by toxic drywall and corrosion of copper wiring in homes. In addition to the fire hazards associated with damaged electrical wiring, corrosion can also lead to the deterioration of smoke alarm systems and fire sprinklers - compounding the risk of damage and injury from fire."

Congressman Melancon was joined on the letter by eight other U.S. Representatives who share his concern about the dangers posed by toxic Chinese drywall to homeowners. Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.) is leading a similar effort in the Senate and also sent a letter to Administrator Cochran today that was signed by her and five other Senators.

In his letter, Congressman Melancon urged the Fire Administrator to:

1. Coordinate and Expand Research: The letter encourages the Fire Administrator to direct federal Fire Administration scientists to work with the CPSC to continue and expand the ongoing research on the fire hazard associated with defective drywall.

2. Provide Guidance for Homeowners: The letter requests that the Fire Administrator provide public guidance for homeowners, outlining steps that may be taken to reduce fire risks in homes containing toxic drywall, and increase efforts to alert homeowners of these risks.

"We believe that further research and increased public awareness are important steps toward protecting families from harm, and we appreciate your prompt attention to this matter," concluded Congressman Melancon.

For a full copy of Congressman Melancon's letter, please [click here](#) .

For a copy of the letter sent by Sen. Landrieu, please [click here](#) .

Congressman Melancon has been an advocate in Congress for Louisiana homeowners with toxic Chinese drywall in their homes. He has [introduced legislation](#) , the *Drywall Victims Insurance Protection Act* , which would prevent insurance companies from cancelling or failing to renew homeowners' policies as the result of finding Chinese drywall in the home. The bill would also prevent insurers from changing rates or altering the type or amount of coverage based on problems stemming from Chinese drywall. In addition, the *Drywall Victims Insurance Protection Act* would protect homeowners' rights to sue their insurance companies if their coverage is dropped because of Chinese drywall problems.

Congressman Melancon is also a [co-sponsor of bipartisan legislation](#) that would hold foreign manufacturers accountable for selling defective and dangerous products like Chinese drywall in the United States. The *Foreign Manufacturers Legal Accountability Act* (H.R. 4678) would help protect American consumers and businesses from defective products manufactured abroad by requiring foreign companies to register an agent who would answer for them in a U.S. court of law. The legislation has been referred to the Energy and Commerce Committee, on which Congressman Melancon serves.

Many homeowners have reported that defective Chinese drywall in their homes emits sulfur, methane and other fumes that have damaged their homes and pose a serious health risk for residents. Reported health problems include nosebleeds, respiratory ailments, headaches, insomnia, and skin irritation.

According the Consumer Product Safety Commission, 7 million sheets of Chinese drywall were imported between 2000 and 2009 - enough to have built tens of thousands of homes. Some consumer advocates have estimated that the cost of property damage could reach \$3 billion. The problem could become especially serious in Louisiana, where thousands of new homes were rebuilt after Hurricane Katrina, many using Chinese drywall.

Approximately 3,000 homeowners nationwide have filed Chinese drywall complaints with the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Homeowners who suspect they may have contaminated drywall are encouraged to file complaints with the Louisiana Recovery Authority by going to <http://lra.louisiana.gov/> and clicking on the "contaminated drywall information" button. Homeowners are also encouraged to file complaints with the [Louisiana Attorney General's Office](#) at 800-351-4889 or www.agbuddycaldwell.com

and the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772 or
www.cpsc.gov/info/drywall/index.html

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